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“ ‘The day before St. Stephen’s Day, an unfortunate wren is caught and stoned to death; he is then hung on a bush. The following day, three boys, one with a piece of crape on his cap, and another ornamented with flowers and some wren’s feathers, go about from house to house, carrying the bush and singing the following lines :—

We ’ll away to the woods, says Robin the Bobbin,  
 We ’ll away to the woods, says Richard the Robin,  
 We ’ll away to the woods, says Jacky the Land,  
 We ’ll away to the woods, says every one.

“ ‘Each verse has the line four times over :—

2. What will we do there? says Robin the Bobbin, etc.
3. We ’ll hunt the wren, says Robin the Bobbin, etc.
4. Where is he? where is he? says, etc.
5. In yonder green bush, says, etc.
6. How can we get him? says, etc.
7. With sticks and stones, says, etc.
8. He ’s down, he ’s down, says, etc.
9. How can we get him home? says, etc.
10. We ’ll hire a cart, says, etc.
11. Whose cart shall we hire? says, etc.
12. Johnny Bill Tell’s, says, etc.
13. How can we get him in? says, etc.
14. With iron bars, says, etc.
15. He ’s at home; he ’s at home, says, etc.
16. How will we get him boiled? says, etc.
17. In the brewery pan, says, etc.
18. How will we get him eaten? says, etc.
19. With knives and forks, says, etc.
20. Who ’s to dine at his feast? says, etc.
21. The king and the queen, says, etc.
22. The pluck for the poor, says, etc.
23. The legs for the lame, says, etc.
24. The bones for the dogs, says, etc.
25. He ’s eaten! he ’s eaten! says, etc.

“ ‘At all other times the life of the wren is protected, as it is considered unlucky to kill one; there are some fishermen who consider it a charmed bird, and always carry a dead one or a few feathers with them when they go to sea.’ ”

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## NOTES AND QUERIES.

ANNUAL MEETING. — The fifth Annual Meeting of the American Folk-Lore Society will be held in Montreal, on Wednesday and Thursday, September 13th and 14th. The importance of the meeting is urged on members of the Society. Members who may intend to offer papers, or who expect to be present, are requested to address William Wells Newell, Permanent Secretary, Cambridge, Mass.

CERTAIN COMMON SUPERSTITIONS. — The following superstitions are given, not as altogether unrecorded, but as examples of beliefs generally diffused : —

If a cat, while sitting beside a door, is seen to wash its face, expect company.

If two spoons, knives, forks, or a double allowance of food be given at meals, some one may be expected who will arrive hungry.

Dogs howling at night indicate death.

If a child, before it is a year old, obtain a glimpse of its own face in a mirror, it will not live.

Breaking a mirror is certain death to the person in less than a year's time.

To see one's shadow while looking in a mirror is a sign of death.

Animals have the power of seeing spirits.

Spilling salt is an indication of a quarrel ; to avert this, throw a pinch over the left shoulder into the fire.

Whether going on business or pleasure, it is an unlucky omen to meet a funeral procession.

When one hears an evil wish or prophecy, in order to avert it, it is necessary to quickly cross the first finger of each hand.

Always pick up pins : if the head is toward you, it is good luck ; if the point is toward you, bad.

Look at the new moon over the right shoulder and wish. If you see it inadvertently over the left shoulder, bad luck will attend you until the next new moon.

A dream of a wedding indicates a funeral ; of white flowers, sickness, and probably death ; of white horses, trouble.

If one chances to pass an axe or a hatchet lying upon the ground with the edge turned toward him, expect misfortune.

Dropping a dish towel is a sign of company.

When soot burns on the bottom of pots and kettles, a storm is portended.

If a clock strikes out of time, it betokens a calamity in the household, and probably a death.

If the palm of the right hand itch, it indicates that one will shake hands with a friend from a distance ; if the left hand itch, it means money.

A stem from a tea leaf, floating upon a cup of tea, means a visitor. There is a charm to insure the arrival of the guest : —

Bite off his head, throw him under the table,  
And he will come if he is able.

If the right ear burns, some one is speaking good of us ; if the left ear burns, he is speaking evil.

In speaking, if one bites one's tongue, it is more than likely that the next statement would have been a falsehood.

A sore on the tip of the tongue shows that it has uttered a falsehood.

Always avoid meeting a cripple face to face ; it brings bad luck.

Always wish when you see a shooting star ; if the wish is uttered before the star is out of sight, it will come to pass.

To find a horseshoe is good luck ; always place it over an outside door, and nothing but good luck will enter.

When knives, forks, and scissors, in falling, stick upright in the floor, prepare for guests.

Never watch a departing friend out of sight, for if you do he will never return.

If swallows fly lower than usual, expect rain ; if roosters crow more than usual, look for rain or news.

If land-birds fly toward water, and sea-birds toward land, rain is portended.

The first article carried into a new house determines the future of its occupants ; never begin with taking in knives or sharp-edged tools.

Remember the dream you have when sleeping for the first time in a strange room ; it is sent for a warning.

If one chance to see a spider suspended from its web directly in front of the face, and utter a wish, if the spider ascends, the wish will come true ; if it descends, it will not.

*Mary E. Chamberlain, Muskegon, Mich.*

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS. — I think many customs may be traced to a belief in the efficacy of this sign. In six months spent in different towns of England and Wales, I noticed that when the grate-fire was dull, and ordinary means failed to brighten it, my landlady would set a straight poker upright against the grate, thus forming the sign. No one would ever explain this arrangement, but she would say with an air of embarrassment, "I thought I'd try it."

After my return home I mentioned this once to an intelligent English-woman of the lower class, and after some hesitation she answered, "Oh ! it's all nonsense of course, but at 'ome they always said it was calling the witch to make the fire burn."

In New England, when only open fireplaces were in use, it was customary to rake up the fire at night, and, standing the andirons in a straight line in front, lay the shovel across them.

More than once I have been told by an intelligent person that, to prevent any annoyance from a mosquito-bite, "you should score a cross with your thumb-nail on the bitten place ; it will never smart again."

All these, I think, are survivals of the ancient custom.

*Pamela McArthur Cole.*

DIVINATION WITH AN EGG. — In front of a hotel laundry, opposite to the place in which I am writing, three old washerwomen are engaged in an inquiry as to whether they will reach the World's Fair. This divination, as I learn from them, can be performed only on the first of May. An egg is broken into a tumbler of water, the yolk to be whole. According to the manner in which the albumen rises, the quest is foretold. This spell is quite new to me.

*E. Foster, New Orleans, La.*